

INTERVIEW WITH

ANGIE HENDRIX

July 21, 1990

Super 8 Motel Near I-25 Interchange and Mulberry St. Exit to Fort Collins, Colorado

by

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She was born October 17, 1961 in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

AH: Yeah. I would say so. I was the typical tomboy. I never wanted to wear makeup, I never wanted to carry a purse, and by golly just give me a tree and I'll go climb it. (laughter) I was not one to play with dolls, but I do have a teddy bear.

AH: In May every year, there was sort of an unofficial bike club in Lander. And every May this bike club would get together and do a ride from Lander to Thermopolis - where the Hot Springs are - then camp overnight and then ride back. Just to sort of signify that by golly summer's here and it's time to get out and start riding. Well in '87, the bike group really wasn't together anymore and nobody wanted to do it, or we hadn't heard from anybody, so Clay and I - well I had been riding with another girl, named Ramona Ray and she the only girl or woman around that there was for me to ride with. I rode a lot with Clay and some of the other guys. Well it's time for a weekend off, let's go relax in the hot tubs, so one evening after work, it was a Saturday, it was Ramona, and I and Mike Baer (who, he was from San Diego, he had moved to Riverton in October of the previous year, and was a reporter at the Riverton Ranger, he came to Riverton by way of a cycle, he cycled from Alaska to Riverton, and he was on his way to the east coast and didn't get any further and got a job at the paper) and Clay and Ramona's mom. So there were 5 of us. And then Greg Ray, who's the, he's the head guy at the SEWC TV, the Public Television Station in Riverton, he's the program director or whatever

you call it there at the TV station, he was going to drive their van over to the campsite with all our gear and stuff and just get there and kind of be our sag wagon along the way in case we needed any road support or anything.

We go out of town, it was an evening about, we probably left town around 5:00 a little after 5:00 or 5:30. And it was May 16th. So we're going along out of town, and maybe not quite 6 miles out and Ramona's trailer (sp?) started messing up, I mean I don't know if it got into a gear and wouldn't shift again, or what, but it wasn't working right. So we pulled over to the side of the road and that was out by where the Owl Creek Campground is - anyway - so none of us had a screwdriver that we needed to readjust her trailer with, so Mike rode his bike back to the KOA or that little Owl Creek Campground to borrow screwdriver from somebody. So he came back with a screwdriver and, or maybe nobody was home, I don't remember, so after we all had stopped and gotten off our bikes. The minute I got off my bike, my tire blew. Totally flat. So I had to fix my tire. So I sat off the side of the road, there's a normal shoulder there and then there's grass or a little gravel and it turns into grass and I was sitting right at the edge of that fixing the tire. And I think I was just getting finished, and I heard a noise, I think it was like loud noise blaring, I'm not sure, but I looked down the road and there was a pickup down in the ditch. And I thought, oh he's turned around in the ditch to get back on the highway, the shoulder's nice and gradual and no problem. So didn't think much more about it. That time, Clay and Mike were standing to the right of me and Mike was closer to the road than Clay was. I think, yeah. And next thing I know, I look up and there's this blur of a pickup and I just turned my head away, and everything went black and sort of buzzy sounding you know, and I don't think I got knocked out, but as I started waking up, I could hear people yelling "Stop that guy, stop him, make sure he gets out of his pickup, and keep him there". I don't know who called an ambulance. I heard people talk to me, I could hear OK, I was having trouble breathing. And evidently I had landed on top of my bicycle on my back, on top of my bicycle. And I think the bumper, the pickup's rear bumper hid me in the back. Cause I was sitting low on the ground. At that point, I didn't know that Mike had gotten hit. And pretty soon an ambulance was there and were cutting off the clothes and putting me on this hard, stiff, very uncomfortable board. And Clay was telling me not to die. I said don't worry, I won't.

MJ: That's pretty clear memory.

AH: Yeah, it was like, I remember people talking like "Woo, she's really bad off" and "this is real serious" and not sounding too hopeful. But I didn't feel too bad. Both of my lungs got punctured and I broke six ribs off the, you know where they connect into the spine, they got broken. And my back, the tenth and eleventh vertebrae got pushed way forward, it just sort of smushed everything in. So I got to the hospital, and they did surgery I guess right away, or pretty close to right away to sew up my lungs. The right one - the other one, I don't know if they sewed it up or it closed up on its own, or what they do, but at that point I don't

know if I still knew that Mike had died. He died right there at the scene evidently. The guy who was driving, 17 years old, and evidently hadn't been drinking or using drugs. And the reason he was off the road was because a bee was in his pickup, or a wasp or something, and he was allergic to them and so he was waving it and was trying to shoo it out the windows to get it away

(Beginning of Tape 1, Side B)

- MJ: OK we got a leader now, you were saying, he thought he had a bee in the
- AH: Yeah, the reason he was off the road was because he thought he had a bee or something in the cab that he was trying to get away from him. Although, my attorney, we had witnesses that said they saw him with both hands on the wheel, but there's also a quote in the paper that he said he didn't even know he'd hit anybody. And I don't know how you could not know when you'd hit something, cause you can hit a rabbit you hear it go thump, thump
- MJ: Sure
- AH: And a person is, I think, a lot bigger than a rabbit and he him headon. He hit Mike headon going 50 or 55 mph.
- MJ: So what was the verdict, I mean what was his problem? Did anybody ever discover?
- AH: He never got charged with anything. There were never any charges brought against him.
- MJ: So nobody knows to this day, what happened to him?
- AH: Huh-uh. Or if they do, evidently there was no use of alcohol or drugs to impair his abilities to drive, so they couldn't do criminal negligence or anything as an accident.
- MJ: Do you wonder much about it?
- AH: Oh, not really any more. Once in a while it'll still go through my head, and think gee you know, I mean it's gone through 100,000 times, gee if I'd been sitting 6 inches further off the side of the road I wouldn't have gotten hit, or, you know, just all the what if's.
- MJ: You say that's gone through your head a 100,000 times?
- AH: But not so much, I mean I don't have time to think about it anymore and it really doesn't do any good. I keep coming up with the same answers and the same

conclusions, so I've never seen the kid, and I know his name, but I don't know where he lives now, or anything.

MJ: So you haven't even tried to get back and find out and talk to him or anything like that?

AH: Uh-uh

MJ: What were your feelings then after you sort of came to, I take it you came to and finally realized everything a day or two later maybe?

AH: Well, it must have been the next day, I was in Riverton that night, that Saturday night and most all of the next day Sunday. And my mom and stepdad, Peter drove up from Laramie and they were they. I don't know when the doctors did this, or how - it takes 4 hours to drive from Laramie to Riverton, so sometime in that time they had given me a drug, they had done X-rays and stuff, and they had given me a drug that makes it so that you can't move any muscle. It is so weird. I mean they told me, I think it was probably Dr. Brome who told me that I was paralyzed, cause I couldn't move my feet or anything. And they had given me this drug so - he'd told me we gave you this drug so you don't move around in case you might do further damage, and all this stuff. But, it was like, I wanted so bad to just move my hand or something. I was trying real hard and it wouldn't do anything. And they were going to give me more of it, and the only thing I could move was my head. I was saying no, don't do that, I don't want any more, thank you. So my family was there, and some friends were there and I slept a lot I guess. Then that evening, the 17th they flew me to Salt Lake to the University Hospital. It was sprinkling that night, I remember getting wet as I was laying on the little gurney thing, getting taken out to the airplane. The lady in the airplane had to keep telling me to breath, cause I guess I'd been on a respirator and they couldn't take it or something in the airplane, or I don't know what, but she had to keep reminding me to breath. "Breath", oh yeah OK! So then I spent 6 or 7 days in intensive care in Salt Lake and pretty much, you know, just slept. They put chest tubes in your sides and between your ribs I guess to drain fluid out and stuff. Those things are awful. I just laid flat on my back for a long time. They didn't operate on my back to put it back to normal until, I think, the 3rd day that I was there, because of my breathing. To make sure, so I could go off the respirator for the operation.

MJ: Was there ever a doubt in your mind during those days that you weren't going to make it?

AH: Nope it didn't even occur to me that I wouldn't. And I don't know if that's, if other people, you know I'd be interesting to talk to people who've had near death experiences to find out if they, you know, just were real determined not to die or if they thought gee "I wonder if I'm going to die?" and then didn't, or what sort of thoughts they had. Cause it didn't even occur to me.

- MJ: At the time you got transferred to Salt Lake, Angie, what sort of thoughts were running through your mind, during all this preparation for surgery and then the surgery and the recuperation from surgery?
- AH: I don't know that I had any thoughts (laughter) mainly just doing it. Just living, I guess, just not. I remember wondering, I guess it was right at the beginning, finding out if Clay was OK. And he said yeah, he was fine, you know, no problem. I said OK good. That was about it really.
- AH: I've thought about it some, I guess, but not really, I guess I focus more on when, I don't know at what point, boy, I don't really think I've thought about it a whole lot. Or like recognizing at what points I felt different emotions, or whatever. But I remember when I was in Salt Lake, I think that's when I really remember being told that Mike had died and I was really mad, and sad, and he was you know a real good friend. It's the first time I'd ever had a good friend get killed. That was really hard.
- MJ: Did you ever become angry or upset about what happened to you as time went on?
- AH: Yeah. I think the more I was awake, and the less sleeping I was doing, the more angry I got.
- MJ: What sort of questions did you ask? I mean what sort of things were bothering you?

(10.58 Tape 1, Side B)

- AH: Why me? (laughter) Why me, was a big one. Whatever happened to the kid who was driving? I called the District County Attorney, and I called the County Attorney and I wanted charges filed and they said they couldn't find any criminal negligence to file charges. I had gotten a lawyer, a guy that had done some work for me before when I'd got my leg broken, but they hired an investigator, did all the investigating and I really, to this day, don't know what they came up with. I've seen all the photographs, and all the depositions that were taken and the interviews with people and that kind of thing, but as far as if they can prove some sort of negligence, I've never seen it. They've never really pushed, evidently they didn't think that there were charges for criminal negligence either, or I'm sure that they would have filed them or tried to get somebody in Fremont County to file them.
- MJ: Have you, in the progression of your thinking, have you changed at all, or do you still feel that you still have anger?

AH: I still have some. Mainly not from, that it happened to me, or that it's, it's made me have to change my life and I liked my life the way it was. I think the hardest part for me, I didn't think I was a very adaptable person, and the hardest part changing is emotions and still have a big sense of loss for not so much being able to jump around and walk and all the things that you'd think it would be for I guess, but mainly for I don't feel like I'm quite the sexual person that I was before. That area for me is the hardest to readjust to. Everything else, it hasn't been easy, but it's certainly a lot easier than that other part.

MJ: You had an image of yourself as a sexual person.

AH: Yeah, that and just the loss of physical, of felling. If I could feel and be paralyzed I'd be great. I wouldn't have any problem with it at all. And some people are paralyzed but still have feeling, I mean they can't, it's strange it doesn't sound like it makes sense but the way my break was, it was a physical break in the bones and the spinal cord but there was also vascular damage done. So all the blood supply was cut off. When that happens, there's no feeling and there's no movement, no voluntary movement. Some people have no movement, but they don't have the vascular damage, so they still have feeling. Or at least some sort of sensation that you know once in a while, when you're getting touched.

MJ: Do you ever have - some people say they can still feel their legs doing something. I mean they can feel it psychologically, even though they can't feel it physically. Do you ever

AH:

AH: I think, it wasn't that there absolutely wasn't any, but it was like we're pretty sure that you're paralyzed and you probably will never walk again, and you probably won't do this and won't do that.

MJ: Did you break down each time you realized that?

AH: I

AH: I think it does. When I was sort of snickering about what I could identify with, is that sometimes when I'm trying to do something, I'll drop something or I'll bump into something, or something just won't go just the way I want it to, or if I'm in a hurry, or I can't do it as fast as I used to do it and I just get instantly furious. That used to happen 20 times in one day and now I'm lucky if it happens once every two weeks, or once a month.

MJ: How did you deal with it, this anger?

AH: Just kept talking about it and yelling and screaming. I'm still talking about it. I go to a counselor maybe twice a month, or once a month, or whenever I feel the need to. I just talk about, sort of like here, when did I start feeling angry first. In

the hospital, they don't really allow you to be angry. You have to be the good patient and you can't cry and feel sorry for yourself, so a lot of the things that I think I should have been going through at the hospital waited until I got home. Then you're in the privacy of your own home, nobody's around, and you can cry and carry on and nobody will care. But if too many people get upset by you crying and carrying on and being pissed off, they get uncomfortable.

MJ: How was your husband during all this?

AH: Probably stressed out to the max. He would drive down every weekend, I was in Salt Lake for two months. He'd drive down every Friday night and come see me. He was there, when I was in intensive care, he was there for 4 or 5 days or something like that. Then when I got into rehab, he would come down on weekends and stay til Sunday afternoon or Sunday evening and then drive back home and work. We'd talk on the phone, and then he'd drive back down again. We had a lot of, quite a bit of, help I think at the store. A good friend of ours from, you might have met him the other day at the store Tom

MJ: I didn't go to the store, Bill did

(20.21 Tape 1, Side B)

AH: Oh you didn't - OK - he came up from Green River and would help Clay at the store and then he'd come to the hospital on weekends and spend time with me too. I don't know who ran the store when he was gone.

MJ: Did you get a lot of pity from people?

AH: Oh yeah, I still do

MJ: Do you?

AH: It's disgusting (laughter) It's like "Oh you're such a pretty girl and God it's too bad you have to be in a wheelchair". It's like uh, you know, you want me to be ugly? Would it make you feel better? (laughter) You know, it's not so bad, the hardest thing is just making the adjustment. If somebody said "OK you need to be in a wheelchair", there's no way you can - you couldn't prepare for it - you couldn't like take it on as a job and say "OK I'm going to study up for this job and in a month when I have to be in that wheelchair I'll be ready for it". There's no way to do it, I don't think. It's not so bad.

MJ: Did you have to start making mental adjustments about, I noticed that when I was at your house, we were in the middle of talking, and you grabbed something and put in your lap before you took off, duffle bag or whatever it was. And I thought to myself, most when they're talking to you don't, aren't aware of what they should

grab next. In other words have you made an adjustment - what kind of adjustment have you made in just mobility?

AH: You do have to think ahead more, because it takes a little more planning to get places. Well for me it's easier to do everything in one trip than to have to take two or three trips. And I was probably that way before the accident too. It's just, it does take more planning. Doing dinner takes more planning, it takes a little longer. I used to hate to cook when I came home from the hospital cause it just took forever - to get the food out, put it on the counter, then you had to take it to counter over to the sink, you know it takes two or three steps to do that. Whereas before you'd just pick it up and walk it over there. It used to take me an hour just to get spaghetti and sauce ready. Now it's like 15 minutes. It does take more planning, and it's more convenient. You know if you can go to the drive-up bank teller and a drive up food place and only have to get out of your car once to maybe get gas or go someplace where they can fill it up for you, you don't have to get out of your car three or four times. So conveniences of drive-up is really great for people in wheelchairs. When I travel, sometimes I fill my own gas because just cause I don't like to have to pay 10 cents extra for somebody else to do it - and it's good for me to just get out of the car and get some fresh air. But people look at me weird, like "oh, maybe we should help her" or I don't know what they're thinking they sort of look at me. It's strange. That was one thing too that really bugged me at first, was everybody just looks at you. In Riverton, it's sort of understandable because I'm the only person that I ever see out in a wheelchair. I mean I know there are a lot of people in Riverton, cause I work with a lot of them that are in wheelchairs - and a few of them get out and get about and do things, but I don't think as much as I do. I've seen them out maybe twice.

MJ: How did you feel when you got your first wheelchair?

AH: Ah - my racing chair? or my first every day chair?

MJ: Well I guess you probably had a regular every day chair from the hospital

AH: Yeah, the first one I had I was borrowing from the hospital. It was a big black thing that was way too big for me. Then when I got my first - my very own first pink one, it was more purplish than this one is - it was like OH WOW this is really cool! People still ask me, they stop me on the street and say "Oh that's really a neat chair, where did you get that?" and "Oh it's pink, and your shoes match" and all this stuff. People aren't used to seeing - I mean you think of a wheelchair and you think of the 45 lb tank that somebody else has to push and that's peoples idea of having to be in a wheelchair. That's not it at all! There are so many companies out there putting out really nice chairs for able bodied people - if they got tired of walking, they'd love having a wheel chair.

MJ: Really?

AH: Yeah (laughter) You'd get around so much faster!

MJ: So you got rid of the old hospital chair and got into your very own.

AH: Yeah. Then I had that one a couple of years and just this last year I got this one. I bought it from Raphael, to guy who won the race today, I bought it from him last summer when I was out in California visiting.

MJ: What does a wheelchair cost?

AH: Oh, if you buy it through a dealer, this one would cost probably about \$1600. A lot of insurance companies won't pay for them.

MJ: Why not?

AH: Because they're not medically necessary!!

MJ: What!!

AH: (laughter)

MJ: In other words, it's not like a drug that you have to have or ... Boy that's a rip.

AH: Yeah. My insurance company paid for my first one and they said "We will never pay for another one" And luckily, they paid for it, cause I couldn't have paid for it. I have good health insurance, I have \$500 deductible, but they've paid over \$93,000 in my lifetime so far just for my medical stuff. But they won't pay for another wheelchair. But I still have some medical bills that I haven't paid off, and I just finished paying some off last year, last December or January I think - I just finished paying them off.

MJ: Well of course you became immediately sensitized then to the problems of handicapped person.

AH: Ah yeah. I was totally ignorant, just like most walking people are, of wheelchairs. I'd really never been around anybody in a wheelchair. I'd never been around anyone active in a wheelchair before. I had grandma's and things that were in wheelchairs, but that's different.

MJ: But you made your adjustment pretty rapidly Angie, it seems to me?

AH: Yeah, I think I did and a lot of that had to do with getting into sports right away. At the University of Utah, one of the guys who works for the hospital - or who did work for the hospital - they have what's called peer counselors, a guy who I think maybe is in with the recreation department too, rec therapy. I think that's a great name - rec therapy. (laughter) He'd come in and he plays tennis and did some

road racing and worked at the hospital. He was a good looking guy, fit and trim and it was like people really can be fit and trim and athletic and in wheelchairs. Then another guy from Salt Lake, John Brewer who's a quad, he's an olympian. He holds national and I think world records in the quad division. He came to the hospital and he showed some videos of his workouts on track and brought in his racing chair and showed it to us and just talked about it. I was really about the only one that showed much interest in it and he knew before that I'd been into bike racing. He took an interest in me and I was interested in what he was doing and wanted to get into it, so he was real helpful. He loaned me, seems like it was a book or something, or may be a video. On the bulletin board downstairs in the rec therapy room, there was an ad, somebody wanted to sell an old used racing chair. And I looked at and thought - well may be - but it was \$400 and I had all these hospital bills to pay. Really didn't have \$400 to spend on something fun, so a friend of mine from Riverton came down and when I was in therapy - I had a lot of visitors, I had a great time, I really did. My mom and Peter came over for the weekend and then my mom stayed for a week. Clay's sister from Memphis, Tenn. came out and spent a week with me. My brother and his wife came up. I saw practically everybody - my grandma and grandpa, my great aunt and uncle, probably wasn't the greatest of circumstances ..

(30.56 Tape 1, Side B)

MJ: Yeah, isn't something how you are able to see people that maybe you'd never normally see? Because of something negative, a trauma?

AH: Yeah. Oh and people, I remember people from Riverton would go through and see me. Some people I didn't remember coming in to see me, cause I was doped up - I had morphine and I was getting morphine and percocet together cause the morphine wasn't doing it for the pain.

MJ: Can you see how you can hooked on drugs?

AH: Oh man - so easy! And then they switched me from morphine to methadone and that stuff's OK but the morphine is much better (laughter) I remember thinking when I came home, I had to gradually ease myself off of it, like cut down in certain doses a week or whatever. When I finally did, I was so much more clear headed that It was just like, oh wow, now I know I don't want to go back to it, but it would be so easy to stay on it.

MJ: Yeah, I think I was on percocet or something to ease the pain after my heart operation and I really looked forward to taking that - I took it an hour before bedtime - and I really looked forward to that pill. There was such pain and the percocet or whatever it was I was taking didn't ease the pain so much as it just made me relax and was able to endure whatever pain there was and forgot about it. But I really looked forward to it, and I was on that for I don't know how many weeks. When I started going off of it, I think I went off of it cold turkey almost,

almost, I couldn't sleep at night. I would roll from side to side, I was never comfortable in one position. I was just like a fish in a hot frying pan, I was just flipping around and I though boy

AH: Give me back the percodan!!!

MJ: Yeah. Anyway where were we?

AH: The people visiting me

MJ: So you were already getting ideas about racing when you were in the hospital, in Salt Lake?

AH: Oh my friend Diana came down, she sort of wanted to tell me something, but she wasn't sure or something. She said "Well I've signed you up for this race that's coming up in Lander in September"

MJ: Who was this?

AH: My friend Diana Keratini. She came down and spent 4 or 5 days with me, just after I had gotten moved into the rehabilitation part of the hospital. And I thought "Yeah, right! In September I'm gonna do a race? Sure!" She said "Well, you'll be ready for it by then. We'll work something out. You'll do it" It ended up that I got out of the hospital on July 19th. I recovered quicker than most people, that the average person does from the sort of injuries that I had, evidently. When I got sent down to the rehab place, they send somebody around. They ask you how long you want to be there, what your goals are, how soon you want to get out and kind of give you the information of well a person with a spinal cord injury usually takes 3 to 4 months in rehab, and all this. And I said "I'll be out of here in two!" And I was. Two months and one day and I was home. I still had back pain and I had just gotten my brace off a week before I was to go home. I wore my brace home in the car, but I got home and never wore it again. When I got home I still - to do a transfer from like the chair to the bed - I have to use a little sliding board, or a maple board that you get on and sort of scoot across on it, like from getting out of the car and stuff like that. And within a week I wasn't using it any more, it's just amazing to me now to think "God, I was using a sliding board when I went home". Gee. I can do a transfer now that's from here to over there that's no problem. A 3 foot gap, maybe a little problem, but it wouldn't bother me so much. I'm a lot stronger than I was then.

MJ: How strong are you?

AH: I'm pretty strong. I don't know. My bench press on a Universal machine, I think my max was like 106, that's what I weigh, and now I only weigh 100 lbs.

MJ: So you're benching your own weight?

- AH: Pretty much.
- MJ: There's not many people in the country that can claim they can bench their own weight.
- AH: Right. My lap pulldowns I could do like 90 or 95 lbs.
- MJ: Are you getting stronger?
- AH: I think so. I've got more muscle mass now than I did last year. Last year when I went to races, I felt skinny. You know, I had skinny little thin arms and now they're not so big, but they are muscular. That lean, mean, fightin' machine type. That's just my body type too.
- MJ: So then you got involved in this race?
- AH: Yeah. That was in September. I got out of the hospital in July. For a while I really didn't do anything when I got home I was still pissin and moanin and saying "poor me" and not doing a whole lot and being depressed. Then I guess the main things that I did was in the evenings, my friend Diana would come over and get me, cause at that time I didn't have a car yet that I could drive either. That was a real major depressant for me, I've always liked to drive and when I got home all we had was our Datsun that's a 4 speed and you can't drive 4 speeds or 5 speeds with hand controls. I went for a couple of months without a car and it was not fun. So she'd come over and pick me up and we'd go get groceries or go do whatever and we'd go out and go for walks. Rolling the street, you know how the streets are sloped off to the sides, I remember pushing to the store one day, the first day I ever pushed down to the store, my arms were so tired in the first two blocks, that I thought my arms were going to fall off. (laughter) Cause the left-hand slope, you just had to keep correcting with the left arm, and they got so tired! I don't do it now, I don't push back and forth to the store, cause I just drive. Anyway it would be no problem now. Ah - I thought then "I'm going to do a race - ah!" I couldn't even imagine it. Pretty soon, we're up to 2 and 3 miles and the race came up and I entered. Did it in my everyday chair. I think it was a 3 mile walk, or 2.5 or something, from Lander up Sinks Canyon and back again. I don't know how I finished, probably in the top 15 people, mainly because of the good downhill, I could get moving pretty good. It was fun. It's nice to be around people that are active and doing things and encouraging you, and you know healthy.
- MJ: Were there any other wheelchair people? You were the only one in the race?
- AH: There might have been another woman who was being pushed in a wheelchair. But nobody else doing it on their own power.

MJ: Well now you say there's lots more people in Riverton, Angie, and maybe Lander too, that you know are in wheelchairs and yet you chose to get out and race. You're unusual in that respect, right?

AH: Uh-Uh

MJ: Why, was it just the help of friends, I mean you give credit to other people, but why did you decide that you were not going to be just like you say "pissin and moanin and poor me"?

AH: Cause it wasn't any fun (laughter) I guess. Because I'd always been athletic and I guess I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it again. And I did. I thought "Yeah, I can do this!" Then there was another race in the first part of October - was a two mile walk. I did it in my everyday chair and I thought "OK, I like this, it's time to get more serious". Clay and I went to Salt Lake and we bought that used chair that I'd seen advertised. It's an old chair, it's the type with the 8" front casters that the guys used maybe 7 or 8 years ago.

(40.26 Tape 1, Side B)

MJ: Wait a minute you ran the first two races in a conventional wheelchair?

AH: Conventional wheelchair, yeah. So I thought this is ridiculous, I've got to get something better. So Clay paid for it and brought it home and I started training and I did a 5k race in the next year. It was so thrilling to go from pushing in this, to pushing in something that actually made you go 6 or 7 miles an hour or 10. I didn't have a computer or anything hooked up to that one, I don't think I did. I didn't for a while anyway. I did a 5k race the next year in July or maybe the end of July, the Pepsi Challenge - one of those papers I gave you talks about it a little bit - and I came in either first or second of all the women who did the 5k run. It's a real slow time, it's like 23 minutes or 25 minutes and something.

MJ: Almost 10 minutes more than what you're doing now.

AH: Yeah. So I used that chair from '83, October '83 to October of, I think I used it for a year and then I got one from Top End, a four wheeler. It was hot stuff! It was good. It really way nice. I bought it - I went to a big race in Salt Lake called "Wheels of Fire". It's the largest wheel chair race in the nation as far as participants and prize money. That year I just did the 8k race. I did it in my old green racer and came in first in 8k. My 8k time was 24 minutes and something.

MJ: This was the first time - this race - that you were racing against other wheelchairs?

AH: Yeah and I did real well.

MJ: Did you expect to do well?

AH: No. I didn't really know. I knew I wasn't going to be racing with the top women, but I didn't know what really to expect. What other chairs people would be using. I hadn't really talked to anybody before who'd done, I didn't even know how to travel with my wheelchair. (laughter) This is what you get when you listen to the airlines. I called the airlines to find out how to travel with my everyday chair and what I was supposed to do. They said well "box it up and you can use our wheelchairs that we have at the airports to get between terminals, and we'll ship it on through for you to Seattle." OK so well in order to get to the airport we drove to Casper, to fly out of Casper and fly to Seattle. We took a big box, we boxed up my racing chair - my green one, and then we boxed up this chair. Well we had to finish boxing it up once we got to the airport because I needed it getting into the car - or maybe we boxed it up at home and Clay just put me in the car, that's probably what he did. And then he went and got, we got to the airport and they went and got one of their chairs. Well, the kind of chairs they have, those big 45 lb things with armrests up to your armpits and I mean that would be a great comedy routine for somebody in a wheelchair to just talk about old wheelchairs, cause you can't move once you're in them. They're so - the seats dip down so you're slumped all in there and the seat backs way up to here, and you've got these push handles coming out of your shoulder blades, then you're trying to reach over this armrest that's up to here to push the wheel and you're going like this down the corridor. It's just ridiculous.

MJ: Kinda like an iron lung (laughter)

AH: Yeah. It's horrible. So I got to Seattle. Had to do the same old routine again, had to have one of the attendants or whatever they call them, the people that help

MJ: Flight attendants

AH: Well there's flight attendants, then there people that work inside the terminal helping people with disabilities and older people just getting around. Sort of courtesy type people. So they were there wheeling me around the airport in this old klunker cart, then I get to where my luggage is and there's all these other racers and they're flashy everyday chairs and they're just sitting there and here I am in this big old klunker thing. (laughter) I was like "OK, open this box, I'm gettin my chair out right now!" I drug it out and I put it together and they said "Don't ever let them talk you into doing that again, you have every right to take your wheelchair right up to the gate of plan." They didn't tell me that!

MJ: Well, what do they do with it once you

AH: They put a little orange tag on it and gate check it. Like if you had a lot of luggage and you wanted to gate check? Same thing with a wheel chair. Wheel you up to the gate at the door of the airplane, sometimes you can even talk them

into letting you sit in first class, you can get right on the plane in this chair, get right into the front seat of first class. Then they don't have to worry about getting you onto an aisle chair. They have these straight backed, little skinny, short narrow chairs you transfer onto then they take this everyday chair down into the belly of the plane and put it in last. Then they wheel you on in this other thing. You're always the first one on and you're always the last one off.

MJ: Yeah. Which is - I don't mind being the last one off the plane.

AH: I don't either unless I'm trying to make

(End Tape 1, Side B)

AH: Her married name was Reichert.

MJ: German?

AH: Yeah. Her next married name was Wilhelms. And now she's married again and its Spickelmeier.

MJ: All Germans? Spickelmeier?

AH: Yeah. Nebraska's big on Germans. Especially that area.

MJ: That's interesting, so your grandmother on your mother's side was named Ardash? Same as my wife. OK today is a continuation, this is Tape #2 of the interview with Angie Hendrix, it's the 21st of July, 1990 and we're back in the motel room at the Super 8 after attending - what was that event today?

AH: Wheelchair Junior Nationals.

MJ: Wheelchair Junior Nationals. It's much more relaxing after you talk for a couple of hours, isn't it? I mean you don't.

AH: Oh I've got a tickle in my throat.

MJ: Do you want your water?

AH: Yeah. I drank it all though.

MJ: You mean they actually put you up in hotels and motels?

AH: Sometimes.

MJ: The race officials do?

AH: Yeah. Most races either help out with lodging and pay part of the cost, like I get a reduced room rate, or sometimes they pay lodging expenses and maybe there'll be prize money and that's the incentive to go to the race. Sometimes like at Wheels of Fire they pay half the room rates and there's big prize money.

MJ: \$25,000 or something isn't it.

AH: Yeah total. Other races will just give you really reduced room rates, like less than half price or something.

MJ: This is for YOU, this is not for everybody.

AH: It's for most wheelchair racers. The people who get their rooms paid all the time or most of the time, are the people who are winning - which I'm not quite doing yet.

MJ: But still, you're one of the top, aren't you?

AH: I'm getting closer, but not too many people know my name yet.

MJ: Aren't you what they would call "world class"?

AH: No, not yet.

MJ: You're not? What's you're ranking?

AH: Fifth in the nation technically. Because of our national, on our road racing series anyway. Fifth in nationals in the road race. But then there's track.

MJ: Like what we saw today?

AH: Yeah.

MJ: And you're not ranked in that?

AH: Yeah. I haven't done any track yet, but I imagine I'd probably come in about the same place, because of the people who are competing, the same people I compete against on the road.

MJ: How would you compete with Europeans and the rest of the world?

AH: I hope to find out REAL SOON. (laughter) I don't know yet, I think I've raced against two european women, Connie Hanson is from Denmark and Danielle (I would cream out her name if I tried to say it so I won't), from Switzerland and she used to always beat me. Not by a lot, but I've gotten a lot better this year but so has she. She's, I guess, still beating me.

MJ: So you would rank pretty high?

AH: I'm still in the top 10

MJ: In the world?

AH: Probably

MJ: Top 10 in the world, how does that make you feel?

AH: Well, you've got to remember, there aren't a whole lot of women doing this. I would bet that there aren't 15 women from the United States who race competitively.

MJ: What about the world?

AH: Maybe 20, no there's gotta be more than that. I think there quite a few Japanese, I don't know about women, there are a lot of Japanese men, they're big on basketball. There's women from Canada. There are a few that I haven't come up against from Denmark, who are real good, especially in the marathon.

MJ: Even so, do you ever stop to think about what a quick rise you've made?

AH: Once in a while. (laughter) I should think of it more often I wouldn't feel so depressed. (laughter) Sometimes when my training's not going so well and I don't have - I mean I always have good races. I think the only bad race that I could say I've ever had was the Boulder Boulder this year. I had driven 8 hours the day before and got up early that morning and eaten a late dinner the night before and just was tired and worn out. I felt bad for the first 3 miles, so by the middle of the race I started feeling better. I still finished second and bettered my time over last year by a minute and a half or so. So I still keep doing better times. I attribute it all to doing what my coach says.

MJ: As long as we're on this, let's just continue in this vein - the racing - because we're on it and I'm interested in it. Can you describe real briefly your racing career now. From your first race to the present, without having to go through each and every race. Can you characterize how you started out and what you did? I know that's probably pretty tough.

AH: Well I started out not knowing what I was doing. Just started pushing.

MJ: That's what they call it isn't it?

AH: Yeah - pushing. We go out for runs. I started with old equipment that was heavy - 21 lb chair - then I went to a 14 lb chair and lot newer equipment and more

aerodynamic. Now I've gone to another 14 lb chair but a 3 wheeler and more aerodynamic yet. I've just gotten progressively stronger.

- MJ: You're times. We talked a little about this at lunch. Can you kind of explain what's happening to you in your career because I noticed you've got a string of firsts, in fact racing in Washington, Wheels of Fire. You weren't expecting to do much and you did really well - took first. There's a whole string of firsts and then there's one 10th place and there's a bunch of firsts and now you're times are improving, but your places are dropping a little bit, or have dropped a little bit. Except for today of course. What is going on?
- AH: When I started out I did a lot of local races, in Riverton, Denver, few in Salt Lake, but I guess mostly in Riverton and Nebraska. In a lot of those, I was the only woman in the race. New Times race in Phoenix - it's a real big race, but I was the only woman wheelchair there - so I won first place! And although, if there had been other women in competition, I wouldn't have placed in first. So now, I'm going to more races where there's more competition and it's tougher, but my times are getting faster, so I'm still continuing to improve, but my competition's getting harder.
- MJ: Good, good summary. What, tell me about today now cause this is amazing thing to me. If we put this little thing with you're picture that we took today for example - if use that picture - I think it would be kind of neat to discuss what happened today. What was the race first of all?
- AH: Oh, it was called the "Human Race". A 5k which is 3.1 miles. It's a sprint basically. (laughter) Not really a sprint, but it's a controlled sprint, because you have to start out fast and you have to finish fast and you have to fast in between. (laughter) So I went out fast enough that I didn't build up lactic acid and feel slowed down and sluggish in the first mile, but fast enough so I could just start to feel it and just continued to carry that speed through.
- (9.51 Tape 2, Side A)
- MJ: Your results though is what I'm really interested in.
- AH: Well I finished in 15 minutes and 42 seconds. And the last 5k I did, my best time was 18 minutes and 15 seconds. That was in Nebraska on a course that was a little different than this one. The course that I did the 18 minute one on, I had a different chair also. So you have to kind of compare equipment and course, although this course I think is a little tougher. It had a few more little hills in it and more flats than the Nebraska course. The other one is a little more gradual uphill and then gradual downhill.
- MJ: But you chopped what, how much off, nearly

AH: Two minutes and 33 seconds

MJ: You chopped 2 minutes and 33 seconds off your time.

AH: Yeah. That's a big bunch.

MJ: Which is an example of - I guess this whole race to me is an example of what you're talking about. In that, well I'll take that back, you were the only woman in the race, but your times are coming down.

AH: Um-huh. And that time is fast. That's a good time. That's right up there.

MJ: Why are your times getting better? Why are you getting better?

AH: Cause I'm good! (laughter) Because I'm working hard, and I have a coach who tells me what do and I do it. I'm getting stronger, and the more I race the stronger I get. I think I'm getting smarter. I'm learning how to pace myself and not start out too fast and not overdo it at the beginning. That's something, that's every race that has to be remembered really.

MJ: Because you're so pumped for the race.

AH: Yeah and because each course is different. Whether it's a 5k or 10k, it's maybe hilly or flat or gradual uphill or gradual downhill. You have to take all that in consideration.

MJ: There's a lot of strategy in this racing then?

AH: Yeah. A lot of strategy.

MJ: Would there be anything different about wheelchair racing than say jogging or biking? I think it's sort of a cross between the two myself.

AH: Yeah.

MJ: In strategy?

AH: The strategy is a lot like cycling and I don't really know that much about running, but I'm sure the strategy is very similar. Like attacking on hills and trying to go as fast as you can on descents. But as far as like team tactics or if you have a teammate that you can work with, the drafting is maybe the main thing that's similar to cycling, that wheelchair racing takes advantage of also. It's trying to get in behind somebody to work with them and use their draft. Runners I guess can maybe take advantage of that a little from what I hear. But you can definitely feel it when you're going 15 miles an hour, you're in a draft when you're in one - and you know when you're not cause it's just a little too.

MJ: You're racing with people who are running most of the time right?

AH: Um-huh

MJ: Is that because of the time period we're in, we're just seeing people get into wheelchair racing and they don't have very many separate races for them that are just totally wheelchair races?

AH: Yeah. I think so. Why?

MJ: I'm trying to look at this as a historian, you know, and saying to myself, you and I talked about what it was like for some people in the sport in the '70's. You might as well talk about that.

AH: Yeah. There was no wheelchair racing. I think it was Bob Hall, well George Murray too, George Murray and Bob Hall and Jim Martinson later in the '70's. They wanted to do a race and I think, Bob Hall and George Murray the first one they did was the Boston Marathon. And there were rules then that said you had to have footrests on your wheelchair, you had to have push handles on your wheelchair - just ridiculous things because that was what their perception of what a wheelchair was. What they would do is just take an everyday wheelchair and just cut it down and sort of modify it and strap their legs on and there's their racing chair, maybe use a little smaller push ring. Now it's, it's (laughter) so different.

MJ: What are the changes basically?

AH: Well the chairs when they started would weight like 40 and 45 lbs. and they were doing marathons in 6 hours. And now the chairs weight anywhere from, there's one real light one that's been built that's like 8 lbs, titanium. Most of them are around 14, 15, 13 maybe. And the times, a lot of the guys are doing them under 2 hours.

MJ: Marathons?

AH: Marathons. The world record for the marathon was just set at Boston this year by Mustof Badeed (sp??) from France in an hour, I can't remember, something like an hour and 37. Just unbelievable! You know, 3 wheel chairs, real aerodynamic.

MJ: What kind of problems have wheelchair racers had in terms of race organization?

AH: I think mainly just being allowed to do it. People didn't - "walkies" vertical people didn't think that wheelchair people could do it. I don't know - safety reasons or their perception of what would happen if this person wrecked in a wheelchair, they're going to sue them and oh my gosh there goes their race.

MJ: You mean when you had people like Bob and Jim pushing right?

AH: And John Brewer started doing that. He came along a little later, but anybody who's been in wheelchair sports for very long, anybody who does wheelchair sports has to be an advocate for the sport in just educating people - showing why we can do this, and it's crazy to have to do that, but you do.

MJ: Why, why do you have to?

AH: Liability. Insurance. I guess. Safety. They're not used to working - they're used to working runners. Runners go predictably at certain speeds. Sort of slow on the hills, but generally pretty much all the same all through a whole course. Wheelchairs on the other hand, are very fast on the downhills and a little slower on the uphills. Like for the Boulder Boulder they have a press bus truck that goes out ahead of the lead runner of the elite pack of men, and they didn't know it at the time, but they could change that. They could change their race so they could accommodate wheelchair racers without much problem. After getting the race directors in touch with some of the other big races that wheelchairs are involved in and talking to their race directors, I think Boulder Boulder is going to come around and it's going to grow to be a really good race.

MJ: What was the problem?

AH: They said logically they couldn't do it. They didn't want the wheelchairs to pass this big huge press truck. So it ended up happening because this press truck was in the way and these wheelchairs coming down these hills at 20 miles an hour and the runners are going may be 11 or 12, they either have to slow down which no racer wants to do, runners don't like to have to slow down, so why should we? They just went around the truck and it could be dangerous. The dangerous part is running wheelchairs with runners on a curvy course because runners always take the shortest route. Runners are going to take the inside turn, well that's where a wheelchair want's to be too, but runners in a race always have the right-of-way. That's written in our rules. So if we're in a race and we want to take the inside and there are runners there, we can't do it.

(19.57 Tape 2, Side A)

MJ: Why isn't it the other way around?

AH: Cause there are more runners than there are wheelchairs I guess. I don't know, I don't know why that rule is like that.

MJ: Are you finding Angie, that you know you talk about the battles that these men had to fight in the early days of wheelchair racing. I take the early days were when? The '70's?

AH: Probably late '60's and early '70's.

MJ: After the Vietnam war? OK Are you still running into problems? Now you're a woman.

AH: Yeah, I think so! (laughter)

MJ: Last time we checked! But you're a woman, and you're in a wheelchair, are you still running into problems? Discrimination problems?

AH: Oh.

MJ: Without condemning anybody individually, are you still experiencing any kind of problems, feeling like maybe people are not as aware of your needs as they should be?

AH: No I don't think so. I don't get that feeling. Maybe I'm not very perceptive - I think I'm pretty perceptive. They tend to treat all wheelchairs the same, which is usually good or bad. I mean if they treat you all good they're going to treat everybody good, they don't discriminate between women and men. What some races do and I wouldn't say it's discrimination, it's usually for lack of numbers of women, but at a race some wheelchair races will start the men wheelchairs - when there a group of about 80 or 100 wheelchairs at a race - and there's maybe 10 to 15 women, 10 to 15 women in a race is a good number, 15 think is the largest number of women I've raced against - they'll start the men first and then a minute later the women will go off the line. That is preferred by men and women both. What that does in our rules, the National Wheelchair Athletic Association, it's written that when there are separate races being run at the same time, like the mens race and a womens races - OK there's mens, womens, juniors and quads, those are the big general classifications - these racers are all going at the same time and technically if the mens open starts a minute ahead of the women, then the quads and then the juniors, a quad can't draft off of a man who's in the mens open. And women can't draft off men. And that's a rule that there's controversy over because what some races do is just lump all the men and women together, they don't seed any racers, they don't line up any rows, it's just a mass group of people at the start and they go. That can be not only dangerous but

MJ: Can lead to problems?

AH: Yeah. Wrecks and congestion at the start of a race and can't get going good. So it's not for any sort of discrimination or anything, it's just planning and organization I guess.

MJ: OK. I guess my question was sort of confusing to you and me both. I guess what I'm thinking is that there may be some problems of discrimination against wheelchair people in general in races.

AH: Oh. Well yes I would say there probably are - I know there is - in a few races around the country.

MJ: So have you run into it?

AH: One major one - well it doesn't hurt to say it - the New York City Marathon doesn't want wheelchair racers in it. I don't remember hearing specifically why but they just don't. That is the race directors opinion and it won't ever happen unless they get a new race director.

MJ: Do you think you should be allowed to race in any race in America?

AH: Yeah. It's the same as a runner, sure. A runner has the right to run in any race he wants to if he qualifies and if he has the ability to do it - like physical training and being in shape and has trained for it. There's no reason why a wheelchair racer shouldn't be able to either.

MJ: What is the perception of race directors and people in races, runners, towards wheelchair racers?

AH: Yhew - that's a good question. I would say for the most part, for the races that I've been in anyway, like when I went to Nebraska to do a race, the race directors didn't know that people raced in wheelchairs. They had never seen anyone do it. So they were thrilled. "Oh yeah, come on down, oh that'd be great, yeah we'd love to have you here!" So, it goes from real enthusiasm and wondering, sort of I guess or being curious, to being a person who's really a strong advocate of wheelchair races and pushing being just a real go getter and trying to help just as much as possible.

MJ: So you just run the gamont of reactions, just depends on where you're at?

AH: Yeah. Any race that's going to have a wheelchair division in it, somebody has to approve of it and usually that's the race directors area. They wouldn't have it in there if the race director didn't approve. Like this race here, this is the first year they had a wheelchair division. They're curious how they could improve, what they should do next year. And I just mentioned to them that most racers like 10k distances better. But that doesn't necessarily have to happen. The course is a good one, it's hilly and it's flat and it's slightly downhill and there's turns and the streets are pretty decent, there's not a lot of potholes and the traffic control was good.

MJ: Speaking of potholes and things, have you ever had any accidents on the race course?

AH: No. None. So far knock on bedspread (laughter) not a one. I've never had a flat tire. I've never had any problems with my chair at all. A lot of that is due to using good equipment and just checking my tires making sure that they're not overly worn. Make sure air pressure's right. Checking my wheels and making sure everything's tight and not going to go flopping around and my leg straps are all in one piece. Checking equipment, it's a very important thing to do.

MJ: Getting into the actual mechanics or techniques of racing. Is there some pretty fierce competition between racers? What kind of things go on out there?

AH: Well, oh boy, there's everything from new wanting to be Ann Walters at a race

MJ: Who's Ann Walters?

AH: She's from Illinois. She's Illinois squad. You know, I talk to her, we're friends. Like Jean Driscoll, she's another person from Illinois, she calls it a healthy rivalry. There are three women on their team who are all very good and the top two on their team are winning most of the races right now. It's either Jean or it's Ann or it's Jean or it's Ann. (laughter) And they just sort of switch off. That's Ann Cody Morris that I'm talking about. The men I think it's a little more healthy rivalry and competition, but it's also a little more fierce or a little more ...

MJ: Do you get any genuine antagonisms, somebody just doesn't like somebody else?

AH: Oh yeah, there's a few of those. Yeah, I was at a race in California and this person started - I mean there's this in every sport I'm sure. Some people think that controversy is good for the sport, being loud and obnoxious and belligerent and getting carried away. If you get attention great! There's one person from California who a lot of people don't like because he's that way. He just likes to get into arguments with people for the show evidently. Underneath it, somebody said one time, that he's really a nice guy. I've only met him, just been introduced to him, and I don't know this person real well. There's not a lot of it in wheelchair racing, I don't think, as far as a lot of antagonism. There's only like a few people I can think of.

(31.33 Tape 2, Side A)

MJ: Seems like what you're saying, what I've been hearing, is that these wheelchair racers today want to promote the sport about as much as they do want to win a race. Maybe that's wrong?

AH: No, I think that's right. It's getting to be, anyone who wants to do it seriously is looking, if they don't have a sponsor, is looking for a sponsor to help them travel to win the races that have the money. I mean, I've been doing it now for 3 years,

well traveling since '88 - Wheels of Fire was my first race - and they paid for me to come in that race.

MJ: That was your first race?

AH: Yeah. They get a large, large, large donations from corporations. They use a lot of that money to bring racers in. Most all the racers at that race are paid - they pay for airline tickets. Actually, they never reimbursed me on my tickets. I wrote to them for a year to try and get my money back and I never did. But anyway..

MJ: That could be because of where the sport is right now.

AH: It was the person in the job.

MJ: Oh really.

AH: Yeah. In general people like me - like I'm looking for sponsor - and I want to do this for the next at least 5 years seriously and probably longer, probably at least the next twenty - really! But 5 or 10 seriously, I suppose. And unless you have a sponsor or you are independently wealthy, it costs money to fly all over the country! (laughter)

MJ: How are you able to afford to do it now?

AH: Well, in '83 I got hit by a car and broke my leg. This was before my other accident. And my insurance company paid and so did the guy who hit me. So luckily I have a large sum of money tucked away - some of which I draw on and some I don't - and basically that's how I do it.

MJ: What is your ambition now - tell me about your plans. You told me a lunchtime, but I want to put it on tape. You just said you want to race seriously for the next 5 to 10 years.

AH: Yeah, we were talking about going to Barcelona, Spain right? Yeah, the next Olympics, I would like to be there doing something. Some sport or some event. On track I suppose. So what I have to do to qualify for that is to start doing more track - more? - start doing track, I haven't done any yet or no competitions. Go to some regional meets. And hopefully qualify to go to nationals. If you qualify to go to national, you go do nationals which are usually like in May and if you're good there and somebody sees you and they know that you've raced for a while someplace else and they've heard your name before - and again it also helps because there's not a lot of competition in the United States. There are only maybe 5 to 10 people to pick from. Course only 5 or 4 get to go. I really don't know how many get to go. I think 5 went last year or last time they had them. What I'd like to do is try and go down to the University of Illinois sometime maybe this fall or next spring and train with Ann Cody Morris and Jean Driscoll and Ann

Walters and just work with them and learn their technique that they're using and I don't know if learning it that soon and then trying to apply it would benefit me a lot but I think just training with some other women who are fast, training with someone who's faster than me would definitely help.

- MJ: Where do you stand in terms of age, when you compare your age to those women. Are you young, are you old?
- AH: Um - I'm older than all of them, but Ann Cody Morris is 27 so I'm only a year and a few months older than her. Jean Driscoll is 22, I think, 23, 24 maybe I'm not sure and Ann Walters is 21 I think.
- MJ: No women have been racing long enough to be able to establish any apprege or I mean any standards as far as racing goes right?
- AH: Not too many, there's a few. Sherry Ramsey from Colorado, Denver, she's been racing for about 11 years. She's won the Boston Marathon 3 times, she has gold medals from Seoul, Korea in the last Olympics, some silvers and a bronze. She's done really well, she's 33 I think. She started when she was a kid, really. She was born with a birth defect.
- MJ: How do you feel your chances are?
- AH: Real good!
- MJ: You're pretty competitive aren't you?
- AH: Yes, I am. I used to think that being competitive was bad. I didn't like to think that I was competitive, when I was little I thought "I'm not competitive, no sir", but my gosh (laughter). I think it can be used in bad context. One thing about wheelchair racing is that it's a lot of fun, because most people, almost everyone in the sport is helpful. If I had a question about pushring size, I could ask 5 different people and probably get 3 different answers, but everybody would be willing to help.
- MJ: I noticed that out there today. People were very helpful and wanted to help other.
- AH: Yeah, it's a great, there's a lot of not really comraderie, cause it's a real individualistic type sport but, I don't know, people just know that you don't get anywhere by not sharing information. And I don't know if it's just that or people are just helpful. I mean it's fun and it's a growing sport. There are people who walk - there's a few people who walk - that want to get into wheelchair racing just because it's fun.
- MJ: You're kidding me!

AH: No. Craig Blanchette (sp?), who's right up there in the mens, he used to be, last year I think he won all but one of his races last year, he's been sponsored by Nike or he is sponsored by Nike right now I think he has a three year contract with them -- he has a couple of roommates who walk and he has gotten them interested in wheelchair racing and one of his friends, Dave, did Lilac Bloomsday Race this year which is a 12k race and it's real hilly and he hadn't been training very long and didn't have his gloves wrapped right and ended up with massive blisters on his hands, but he finished the race and came out pretty well, like in the middle of the men's group.

(40.42 Tape 2, Side A)

MJ: How do the wheelchair racers who are paraplegic or quadriplegic look at these people?

AH: Some don't like it, and some think it's great. I think it's great because anybody doing it, it's going to just help it be accepted more! I don't think that there's any advantage that walking people have over paraplegic. There may be a little advantage with abdominals, cause a person who's walking has all their muscles. That's the argument that people will give if they're not in favor of it. Is that "look at all this advantage they have, they have abdominal muscles, they have back muscles, they have leg muscles, they can use all that to their advantage" but I don't think it's always an advantage, plus they get stiff, they get sore, they can feel it, they get uncomfortable - and we don't! (laughter) Their legs weigh a lot more than ours do, because they have all the muscles and everything (laughter) and ours are all skinny and atrophied. I don't know if that's a real big difference. I would think someday a walking person might be as good as a person in a wheelchair if they had trained the same amount of time and do the same things that a person in a wheelchair would do to train. Their arms would get as strong. It's a great arm workout, cardiovascular workout.

MJ: Where does it really tell on you after a race. Where are the pressures?

AH: Upper back muscles.

MJ: Because of the stretching?

AH: The pushing yeah, the pushing down and the bringing your arms back up and pushing back down.

MJ: I know you're not a historian, but you seem to know a little bit about the history of the sport. Looking over a broad period of time, if you had some foresight, where do you think you are right now in the sport - where do you think the sport is? For wheelchair racers in general and for women.

- AH: I think, and I hope that it's at the beginning. I hope that it's going to grow a lot - that we're not like in the middle - that it still has a long way to go. That it will be widely accepted and people will rush out buy wheelchair and go racing like they buy rollerblades and go zooming down the street! It's just as fun and goes just as fast!
- MJ: What about women? Are you considered to be sort of, I don't mean to use this in a negative term, but a sort of freak in that most women are paraplegic women are content to just to be in everyday wheelchairs?
- AH: Well, I don't think so. It's kind of hard to say - I would think the women who get hurt maybe got hurt by being active in the first place. The highest portion of people that are hurt are somewhere between 19 and 24 years of age males and it's usually drinking accidents, automobile and alcohol is the highest #1. But for women - I don't know if it's the same for women. I mean, I got hurt being active in the first place. I have a friend who got shot with a pistol, a friend who fell out of a building, a friend who fell off of a cliff hiking, those aren't real active things, but I don't really think that a person would just take up wheelchair racing because they were in a wheelchair. They would have to be competitive and have some sort of interest and they have to have determination and all that to start with I think.
- MJ: I guess what I meant, I'm sorry I didn't pose this question right I must be tired or something, that I'm not getting these questions.
- AH: Maybe I'm not receiving them because I'm tired, I don't know
- MJ: But I mean, how do other women view you? Other women period and other women in wheelchairs? I mean you said the most you've ever raced against was 15.
- AH: There are a lot of women out there.
- MJ: Yeah, and I wonder what the attitude is, you know? Why more of them don't do it?
- AH: I don't know. I really don't know. Its crazy.
- MJ: Yeah, but wouldn't you like more competition?
- AH: Yeah! It would be great! It would be great for the sport. It would be more fun, I'd have more friends. (laughter) I've talked to people in Riverton, men mainly because the woman that I know, she's not interested at all - but even the guys aren't interested. They're more into beer drinking and ...

(Beginning Tape 2, Side B)

- MJ: Let's see if we're on, on, on.
- MJ: So these guy's are more into beer drinking, collecting a paycheck and hanging out.
- AH: And I don't know what their thinking is. There's one guy in Sheridan that I did get interested - or he was interested maybe already. I think it has more to do with the way a person is whether or not they're in a wheelchair. Doesn't make any difference. Well I don't know if that's true either to tell you the truth. Cause this guy that I knew up in Sheridan, Pete
- MJ: What's his last name?
- AH: Grubb, you know him?
- MJ: Yeah
- AH: He's a nice guy. He used to do autobody work and loved to party, wasn't really athletic before and he got into wheelchair racing and he likes it, he doesn't do a whole lot of it - he's more recreational, which you know not everybody can be serious about it.
- MJ: He teaches, but he is interested in conditioning because he teaches over at the YMCA.
- AH: Yeah, he does a lot of weightlifting. So, I guess he's health minded, you know, he watches what he eats and eats well.
- MJ: Which might stem from an attitude, a competitive attitude.
- AH: Yeah, and also being in a wheelchair you either have to watch what you eat and eat healthy or you get fat. I luckily have a thin body type and I eat healthy anyway, but I think I ate too much desserts. To many chocolate cookies or chocolate chip cookies. I don't know, racing is expensive. Chairs brand new, brand new complete easily run \$1200 to about \$1700. That's if you buy it all from the manufacturer who makes the chair. Like Clay builds my wheels because we can get some of the parts from wholesalers so it's a little less expensive, but then it's not really because I use good rims and expensive tires. They're still \$250 a pair!
- MJ: For tires?
- AH: For wheels.
- MJ: For wheels?

AH: Just my rear wheels cost about \$250 or \$300 dollars. So it's an expensive sport. And Clay is my sponsor in that way. I get clothes and equipment and power bars and shoes and I do get a lot of things through the store which helps a lot. But as far as my plane tickets and stuff, I do that all on my own.

MJ: So what you're saying is that it eliminates a lot of people from racing right off the bat?

AH: Yeah. I think so.

MJ: The initial investment required?

AH: Yeah. Lot of people in wheelchairs don't hold high paying jobs evidently. I don't know.

MJ: I have a couple more questions to ask. So your eventual goal is to do what then?

AH: Well, my eventual goal is to do some marathons. I have a lot of eventual goals. I want to be in the 1992 Olympics, if not those at least for sure the '96's. And I just want to keep getting better and one day want to be known as "The woman who's the best in the United States!" (laughter)

MJ: Right on. What a great statement.

AH: At least for a month or so - a year maybe. That's a long time to hold that position.

MJ: But it seems to me that it's going to get tougher and tougher because of the ...

AH: A small pyramid of people at the top. And even, it'll be fun trying even if I don't get there. As long as I can be up with the lead pack of women, maybe win one here, lose one there, win one here, trade off in the top 3 or 4 I'd be very happy.

MJ: One of the other questions I wanted to ask you was about training and racing in Wyoming. Is there anything unique about doing this in Wyoming?

AH: Yes, doing it all in Wyoming is unique! (laughter) The fact that I'm doing it in Wyoming is unique! I'm the only one doing it. Pete competes at local races and he's come down to Riverton once and he did a race with me this spring, but he's never gone out of the state, well he went to Montana, but he doesn't travel nationally to do any races. I'm trying to twist his arm to do some, but doesn't seem too interested. The roads are great around Riverton for training. Not a lot of fast traffic where I go. The air's clean, I don't get smog in my eyes and in my lungs when I go out.

MJ: The smell of the sage after a rain.

- AH: Oh it's great! Yeah, there's some great scenery! Great view of the mountains off in the distance.
- MJ: How do people treat you?
- AH: Usually with amazement or they think I'm such an inspiration. I've heard so many say "Well I've thought about running for so long, and gosh one day I saw you go by and I was just inspired and there's no reason why I shouldn't be out there doing that if you can do that in you wheelchair!!" Well, I guess that's a compliment. People say "Oh gosh, you go all over town. I've seen you up in the west end of town and way out north and my gosh you sure get around in that thing!" (laughter) yeah, I sure do, I put in my miles. Most people are real friendly and wave at me on the road and give me plenty of room when they go around.
- MJ: Do you think people...now I wanted to get into wheelchairs in general, unless you wanted to add something.
- AH: Not that I can think of.
- MJ: Well if you do, just throw in. Generally, do you get treated with deference, do people like respect you or do they find it difficult to talk to you because you're in a wheelchair, I mean you're down here - what's the impression you get from people who talk to you - walkies as you call them? (laughter)
- AH: Well I think it has more to do with my attitude then theirs. That what it seems like. If i'm like at the store for instance, if I'm working and I'm having a rotten day and I don't say much to them to start with, they're not going to say much to me. And that may just be more to do with the store, I'm an employee and they're just looking and they may just think I'm not very friendly. Whether I'm in a wheelchair or not. But, if I'm joking around and just talking to them like they're a normal person (laughter) as if there are normal ones (laughter) then they treat me like a normal person. Sometimes kids will come in and just sort of look at me - little kids - and either their parents won't address it and just let their kids stare and I'll say something like "Hi, how you doing!" just sort of let them know that hey I'm really a person, by golly look at me, I can move and do everything! Or the parents will say "Now don't be staring" and not really say anything to me, but then leave the store.
- MJ: Is that because people are self conscious?
- AH: I think so. And I think kids are too. But kids are more honest about it. Adults are pretty weird. It goes both ways. If I'm self conscious in the chair people treat me like they're self conscious.

(9.57 Tape 2, Side B)

- MJ: Are you?
- AH: I used to be. I'm really not anymore. If I think about it, which I really weird, sometimes I feel that way. If I'm having a good day and I'm feeling great than everything's fine. I guess it's gotta be the same way with other people.
- MJ: It is, because I think human beings are in this, I don't care if this goes on tape, but I think human beings are very complex and I think some of us are on the verge of doing some real weird, wild things, but a lot of social morays restrictions come into play and we're controlled, we act controlled. And so, you may really be having a bad day but you're trying to act nice. And so other people say, well she's trying I'm going to try. So I think it's whether you had an accident or you didn't have an accident, I think there are days when you are going to be just a little bit stranger than on other days. I think that is normal human behavior.
- AH: Yeah, and I don't think people in wheelchairs sometimes are allowed to feel like they have crappy days. Like I was saying earlier a friend of my was saying "Oh, Angie, I'm so depressed, but I shouldn't be should I?" Well sure, if you feel depressed - you're depressed! You shouldn't feel one way or another - you are or you're not.
- MJ: That's pretty realistic
- AH: But she's so used to putting on the smiley face and making everybody think that everything's fine.
- MJ: What an ungodly amount of pressure that must put on somebody. Because here they're already at a physical disadvantage - maybe that's my prejudice - but I would perceive that person to have a physical disadvantage and then stacked on top of that is an emotional disadvantage. I mean if they're supposed to perky and like that fellow we met today, Harvey, you know - non-stop talk Harvey and then one day they can't be that way. To have to feel guilty about it, you know, I see what you're saying.
- AH: What was the question you asked me before that cause there was something else I wanted to say.
- MJ: About people's perceptions, about being self conscious and adults getting strange.
- AH: Oh, a friend and I went to a grade school and talked to some third graders and my friend has - he takes medicine for his asthma that is deteriorating a hip joint - and he's all enthused about getting into racing and he's getting his first racing chair then end of July and he's 45 years old. He's been losing weight and he's been training every day pretty regularly in his everyday chair, he's up to 6 miles a day and he's very competitive. His daughter's in this third grade class, so she wanted us to come to talk to her school, her classmates. We had a great time!

He's better at talking with kids that I am really, or jumped more right into it and I just sort sat there. We were explaining to kids that even though we're in wheelchairs we're in the chairs for different reasons. He can walk on crutches, but it is bad for his hip, so he uses a wheelchair to get around easier. I'm paralyzed, so I can't walk, so I need to use wheelchair. Old people may have arthritis and it's bad on their joints so they use wheelchairs. Some people may be amputees and don't have any legs so they use a wheelchair. Some people may use a wheelchair just when they go to the grocery store so they can get around faster. So even though you are in a wheelchair, not everybody's the same. And he has full feeling that I don't, so that's different. They sort of understood that. Then we talked about that it's OK to ask questions of people who are in wheelchairs usually. If it's an honest question of "what happened to you" people don't mind that. I would rather be asked a question and answer it, than to just have them stare at me and wonder. And that got across. We talked a little bit about how do you think a person in a wheelchair would feel if you asked them that question? They said maybe embarrassed or scared or sad or like they wouldn't want to talk about it. Then we said well how do you feel about when you see a person in a wheelchair but you don't ask them. Well curious, and I wonder a lot and we said well, there is nothing wrong with asking. It's better to ask than to stare. It was really neat. We set up some chairs from the classroom out on the paved part of the playground and we let them use our everyday chairs - and they tried doing a slalom course competition against each other and it was great. They had a blast! It really turned out well. I took my racing chair and I did a race, not really a race, but I zoomed across part of the playground and I wasn't going very fast at all, but they thought it was really going fast!! They were REALLY impressed.

- MJ: You know, next time you do that to a class, do you get calls like very often to do that?
- AH: Not really. I talked to a Junior High Class in Lander a couple of years ago and then just this third grade class.
- MJ: Cause if you do this again in the future and I'm around what I ought to do is take some pictures. I think it would be great to take pictures of the looks on these kids faces, when you're in your racing ... do you put your racing gear on?
- AH: Yeah
- MJ: And start pushing. I think I would like to capture the looks on those kids faces, I'll bet that's something.
- AH: Yeah. After I had zipped across the playground and I was sitting there, they just like all came around my chair and they're taller than me, these are third graders, they're taller than me when I'm sitting in my racing chair - so I'm looking up at these little kids and they're like standing 3 and 4 deep all around me asking

questions - and what's this and what's that and why do you have these big gloves on - and finally they really got into it and asking questions and I finally had to say "I think it's time for you guys to go back to your class! We gotta get going, I'm sorry" (laughter)

MJ: What about the, Angie I'm curious about the perspective. When you were walking, you had a perspective from - how tall were you?

AH: 5'6"

MJ: OK, you're shorter now right?

AH: Yeah, a lot

MJ: Well you're not much shorter than that are you?

AH: Oh yeah. 5'6"? Sitting in that chair, I'm probably about 4'3" or something like that.

MJ: Oh, OK alright. So what about the perspective, I know it's different but is it good, bad, indifferent?

AH: At first it's weird. It's bad I would say or just different. Because instead of looking at people in face, now you're looking at their stomach's. You have to look up all the time. Or if people are really perceptive and they're real tall, they'll bend down and get down to your level. It's really interesting, it seems like people would want to have a real conversation, it's sort of an intimate sort of a think, it's sort of weird. Because walking people don't do that. They don't get closer. A conversation between a person in a wheelchair and one standing, a person standing, is a good conversation and everything's going fine, but if that person would kneel down, to me it's maybe a little more polite - maybe not really polite - but like they're thinking ahead a little bit. And also more caring isn't the word but ..

MJ: Consideration. See I would have thought just the opposite, I would have thought that if you were pushing along the sidewalk and a person like me were to say stop, we were to talk, and I was to get down on one knee that you would be embarrassed by that action.

AH: Oh no

MJ: See that's coming from my perspective.

AH: No, sure beats looking up like this (laughter)

MJ: Yeah, well see I didn't know that. I would just have considered that to be an insult and that somebody in a wheelchair might get mad and say "why don't you just stand up and be normal?"

(19:45 Tape 2, Side B)

AH: Some people probably would say that to you. It depends on their attitude and where they are with themselves probably. If they were still angry about their accident. I probably would have felt that too at the beginning, I guess, thinking about it. Because I would think "Well, just be your normal self, I'm trying to be my normal self, so don't be getting and trying to just make me feel better" But that's not a real healthy attitude. (laughter) So I guess you might have to be careful. If somebody's in a racing chair, it's probably no problem, but if they're sitting in an everyday klunker, smoking cigarettes - well smoking cigarettes is no big deal - but if they're sort of just leaning back and being depressed, not saying anything and looking grumpy, you might not want to do that.

MJ: One of the questions I wanted to ask you and I guess this is probably something that reporters have probably asked you in the past and that is - do you think racing for you is a type of compensation for, you know a displacement for anger or frustration?

AH: No.

MJ: I don't get that impression either from you, that you've always been a competitive person.

AH: Yeah. No, it's a good way to get active again and feel successful and get confidence back and it's healthy and you can't do it and drink cigarettes and smoke beer - smoke beer?? - (great laughter) drink beer - you know I'm getting tired now.

MJ: Getting a little ringy (laughter)

AH: Yeah. Drink beer and smoke cigarettes - so I wouldn't say that. Some people might - at first there might be a little avoidance there as far as avoiding anger and not really looking at it and doing something fun instead, but that anger's still going to be there and it doesn't just go away by racing.

MJ: Well then, racing is not an answer to your frustration? Racing is coming from ...

AH: Wanting to win (laughter) Whew - Did I say that?? (laughter)

MJ: There you go, you're not supposed to be a competitor. Do you do other things, an article I read said that you ski or something, what else do you do.

AH: Skiing is very fun. I sit ski, which I sitting in a little sled like device and you're strapped in and has a covering over the sled so it's all encased and snow can't come piling in on top of you. I use little short poles, they're about 16" long. Get in the two thing, whatever you call it, the ski lift - takes you to the top of the mountain and ski with a person hooked to a 12 or 13 foot line behind you, but they ski so that rope stays loose, and you just do whatever pattern.

MJ: I though you'd be independent

AH: Well you can, not at first, but you can eventually. At first, one reason is to have another person with you who's skiing who can help you get off and on the lifts. Cause it takes at least one person and sometimes two to get a person in a sled up onto the lift. And the other reason is in case a new person who's skiing gets out of control, you just don't go sledding off the edge of the mountain. (laughter) which has happened to me on occasion! I've gotten out of control a couple of times and was really glad Don was back there slowing me down. I've skied at Jackson twice and once in Salt Lake, well Park City and once at some other little place outside of Salt Lake and once down at Winter Park.

MJ: Is there any competition for skiers?

AH: Not for sit skiers, because most everybody now has gone to mono-skis, which is a bucket type system mounted on hydraulic suspension attached to one single ski. And they use outriggers on their arms, which are like little stabilizers with little skis on the ends. And that I will probably try someday, but I don't want to try that yet, because I know I'll like it a lot and it's an expensive sport also and I don't want to fall - falling over happens a lot in a mono-ski when you're learning how, cause my balance is real bad anyway now - and trying to sit on one of those things it takes a while to learn your balance, and I can't risk falling over and hurting my shoulder or my elbow or my wrists and messing up my roadracing.

MJ: Can you see yourself eventually getting into other things like skiing

AH: Yeah, I think so. Maybe even tennis. I tried tennis at a sports camp and I thought I would hate it, but I really like it, so I'm looking to get a racket.

MJ: What else do you think you could do?

AH: Oh I would like - it's not a wheelchair thing - but I would like to do more touring, wheelchair touring cross country. Like cyclists do.

MJ: Oh, oh I see, I see

AH: There's a race in Alaska that I want to do someday - it's from Fairbanks to Anchorage or Anchorage to Fairbanks, I'm not sure which - it's 364 miles or something like that. The record right now is held by Jim Martinson, they guy who

we spent a lot of time with this evening, 8 days and something. There's certain rules to the race, you have to rest 30 minutes sometime during the day and they stop at night, but the time during the day spent pushing is what's calculated and he's the fastest one whose done it so far.

MJ: Why is that attractive to you?

AH: Cause it's a real challenge. (laughter) And it's pretty country and I've never been to Alaska. There's some other things I would like to do. There's a marathon and a half marathon in Oweda, Japan that is just for wheelchairs. Last year they had over 300 competitors from 24 different countries and it's happening again the end of October, first part of November - there's that. Then there's a race in Australia, they have Australia Day in January on the 21st and they have 3 races with in about a week and a half's time of each other, but one of them is the AusDay 10K on Australia Day and they're trying to build an international field of racers and that's coming up in January and I've already sent in my application for it. (laughter) So there's a lot of international - there's a big marathon, I will do a marathon probably next year will probably be my first one.

MJ: That's amazing. That you want to go overseas, what about sponsorship though. Wouldn't you have to have sponsorship?

AH: Either that or dig into my savings. I get a little bit of money from Social Security Disability Income because I worked before my accident so I'm drawing what I had paid into Social Security. So that's going into a savings account and right now I have enough to buy the ticket over and back round trip to Australia.

MJ: What does your husband think of all this?

AH: He wants to go with me! (laughter) He said "Ange I've been thinking about it and if you really want to do Australia and you want to go to this race and are accepted, I'll see what I can do to arrange it with the shop that I can go with you"

MJ: Sounds like he's very supportive.

AH: Yes. He is, very, too much. (laughter) He's too liberal, he lets me go too much, too many places. It was funny, when I went to California last summer to visit with a friend and train with her for a couple of weeks, Emily Ball, and I went over there and bought this wheelchair, \$600 from Raphael, just the frame, I had the wheels and then I also bought my car in California, my Nissan, so I was like I found this car. I'd been looking for one since October the year before and I could never find any used, that had automatic transmissions. So here it is June I guess and lo and behold go into a lot that has Nissan's and there's one with an automatic. It was an '88 even, so it was on sale. So I called my bank faxed some forms and they faxed this and they faxed that filled out all those applications and Emily would get on the phone before I talked to Clay and she'd say "Now Clay, don't blame me for Ange buying this car. Let her come back again OK?" (laughter)

She kept saying that Clay would never let me go far from home because I was spending too much money. (laughter)

(Approx. 30.35 Tape 2, Side B)

MJ: How has your relationship with your husband changed since your accident and then since you got involved with racing, or has it?

AH: It think it's become more realistic, which maybe is a funny thing to say.

MJ: You mean you're falling out of the kind of love that you used to have?

AH: Right. The blissful sort of stuff. But see we spent our first anniversary when I was in the hospital and that was really the pits. I think I got one anniversary card, maybe two.

MJ: All the rest were all get well cards?

AH: Yeah, right. Yeah I had a ton of those, but that's good too.

MJ: When you said it's become more realistic, do you think there's a certain amount of resignation that this is the way it is and now we have to start building from there?

AH: Yeah. That's definitely the way it is. And I think we're just starting to do that. Well in some areas we've been doing that for a long time. But there's still issues and things we haven't really talked about, or haven't discussed in a lot of depth.

MJ: Do you mind saying, or is that to personal?

AH: Well our intimate relationship is changed and I wouldn't say exactly for the better. I know that we still both love each other and want the best for each other and we're great friends and we support each other in what we do, but still from like what I was saying before, lack of ... I get really, really angry, that's the one area of my life that I still get really totally furious about is having physical sensation taken away from me. That is pretty tough to deal with. In most all other areas of life it's pretty good. Real good I would say.

MJ: That's great. You know, whether you're in a wheelchair or you're not in a wheelchair, whether you're paraplegic or not a paraplegic or you make changes in a marriage. I can tell you that, I've been married for 24 years and you do make changes. You want to have kids?

AH: Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. We just had friends who visited and they had kids and now I don't! (laughter) So someday, maybe like 12 or 15 years

down the road, I personally don't care if I have kids or not, but if we did, we probably would adopt.

MJ: Can you have kids?

AH: Yeah

MJ: Physically you can have a kid?

AH: Yeah. Everything's the same, everything still works. The only thing that would be maybe different is, I guess, from what I hear, is that sometimes women don't know for sure when they're going into labor. There are different sensations, like when I have to go to the bathroom, I get, it's really hard to explain. You know when you have to go to the bathroom, your bladder feels like it's full. Well, it's not the same.

MJ: Oh it isn't?

AH: No. So it sends different signals. I think being pregnant wouldn't be too different. Actually I have a friend who just had a baby, she's unmarried and wasn't really looking to get pregnant, but did, and she was just thrilled about it after she thought "yeah, this is going to be cool". She lives in California by herself, she has friends out there, but she just had the baby the 7th or 8th of July.

MJ: She's a single mother?

AH: Yeah. I need to write to her. That's one thing I've been wanting to the last few weeks. So - I have 3 cats - that's family enough. (laughter)

MJ: Getting back to the racing for a second because this has to do with your accident. Now you said there were classes and it's based on breaks? I didn't know that, I thought classes had to do with age, ability, novice

AH: Well they do have to do with age. There's a masters that does have to do with age. In open mens, there's open mens and there's masters. Master's I think is anybody 40 and older maybe, I'm not sure. Then in womens, because there's so few women racing, it's generally womens open. Once in a while there'll be womens quad division. In quad's a lot of times it's just quads, but there are different levels of quads. John Brewer from Salt Lake is a 1B quad. Depending on where you back was broken, that's the class they put you in. So like from C1 to C3 is class 1A. So the higher up you are, you're in 1A. There's 1A, 1B, and 1C. Those are the three division of quad division. Then it goes to class 1 which is like a high thoracic, like T1 to T4 or 5 would be class 1, from 5 to 8 or 9 would be class 2, 9 to about 11 is a class 3, from there down is 4, and 5 is like if you can partially walk but you have some sort of impairment and then there's other and when you get into other in international competition there are so many

classifications that a lot of times they have to do away events because there aren't enough people to fill up all the categories to fit in for like second, third in all those divisions.

MJ: Where are you?

AH: I think I'm a class 3, but a lot of that again has to do with - they do muscle tests, like if you can lift your arm over your head and extend our triceps, that's great. Like for me would probably have more to do with balance, where my balancing point was, how far I could sit forward before I fell and all that kind of stuff. I might be a class 2, I'm not sure.

MJ: Well where was your break?

AH: T10 and T11 so I'm sort of right on the line between 2 and 3 I think, but I never know. When they say class, I always put T11 for my break.

MJ: And let them throw them into whatever class they want to.

AH: Yeah, cause I've never been classed. That has to do with the NWAA, National Athletic Wheelchair Association.

MJ: It's NWAA, National Wheelchair Athletic Association.

AH: Yeah

MJ: This is all so new to me, you know, maybe it's new to other people too.

AH: Yeah. When I first heard about it. When I first heard about the NWAA, was from a kid who lives in Powell. Wyoming Independent Living each year puts on a conference. We were at this conference, that's where I met Pete and bunch of other people from around the state. This kid was talking about racing and all these sports and things he used to do when he went to school in Minnesota. So I got real enthused about getting into racing, that was part of why I got into racing too. I wanted to get into basketball too and I tried basketball, but I think it would be fun and I might someday play it recreationally but it's a bang up sport. You crash your chair, you tip over and all kinds of stuff.

MJ: You're into competition, but you're not into danger.

AH: Yeah. Not into physical.

MJ: I think that your main drawback wouldn't it be, is that you're living in Wyoming and there's not a whole lot of, like you say, you're the only person.

AH: It can be a drawback, but I think it can also be an advantage, hopefully. If I can find a sponsor, present myself in a way that will say, "look, I'm a Wyoming

person, the only one doing this, so let's get some attention for the state and for whatever I'm doing and promote it" I could help it grow within the state. I would love to go around to different towns and cities and talk to kids and show them equipment and show them slides and videotapes of people being athletic and doing things. That's one thing I would like to do. I would also like to be a consultant to an architectural firm or architects when they're building buildings.

MJ: Really?

AH: I used to get so upset, go into a hotel room that supposed to be accessible and they put the towel racks where you can't reach them. Or they do everything really nice, everything's down really low, then light switches are up high, like up where those are. Just they'll do everything pretty much ok then they'll screw up in one place. It just used to piss me off. (laughter) Now I just sort of laugh at it, cause I'm pretty versatile and a lot more adaptive than I used to be.

MJ: You're stronger

AH: Yeah, A point that Jim made at our camp - the camp I went to - was he asked "How did everybody get to the camp or how did you get to Minneapolis? You flew in an airplane, right? Well that's an adaptive device that enables you to get from one place to another. It's no different than being in a wheelchair." I'm like yeah, that's kind of a new analogy, I kind of like that. It's just one that people are so used to that they don't think about it any more.

MJ: Have you gotten to the point where you feel there are no restrictions on you physically? Maybe there are, but you feel that they're really

AH: Pretty much. Yeah Pretty much. Because if I wanted to get into a building that had 8 steps, I would either, if I really, really, really wanted to I would either call ahead and make sure somebody was there to get me into the building or raise a fuss if they wouldn't or ask somebody on the streets to help me or I'd crawl up them myself. And I could do that if I really, really wanted to.

MJ: Have you become more aggressive in your approach to things?

AH: Yes. I don't go up curbs very well yet. I'm learning now to go down curbs doing wheelies - lifting up my front end and going down a curb. That's not something that I have to do a lot so I don't practice it. At home I either go down the curb cut that's right next to my driveway when I park on the street, or I go down backwards a lot of times just because that's the way I learned and it works so I do it. But a lot of times when I get to a race and we go around the street with my friends, everybody's hoppin off curbs and going up curbs and I say "Wait a minute, I don't do curbs!" It's like come here, can you help me, come here a second. You get somebody's who's standing by, they get to do their good deed for the day and help me out at the same time.

MJ: But you have become more demanding. Can you give me an example of how you have become more demanding of other people to pay attention to your needs?

AH: Well, let me think, boy.

MJ: Have you ever been in the grocery store and gotten made at anybody for not making things accessible to you or like to you say motels and hotels may claim the accessible, but they aren't really.

AH: The only thing I can really think of is when I first came home - Riverton Post Office is not accessible and it's a Federal, State Building.

MJ: It should be one of the first.

AH: Yeah. But, I called the postmaster and complained and said "I would like to go to the post office and I can't, I have to send a friend and it should be accessible and blah, blah, blah, blah" They were polite and sort of just put me off, so I wrote a letter to some housing authority or something in Washington, D.C., I used to get a magazine called Paraplegic News it's put out by the paralyzed veterans of America, and in there was a form to send in if you had a complaint about State or Federal building to send this in and blah, blah, blah. So I did that and I got this report back that said they had gotten it, that they'd sent the post office this form and this letter and they got this back and basically what it was is that when building was built they didn't use a certain fund of Federal money. If they had used the certain fund of Federal money, then they would have to make that building accessible. So since they didn't use that Federal money, certain little allotment, then they didn't have to.

MJ: Isn't there some sort of federal act "Architectural Barriers Act"

AH: That's what it was, that's what I called them on. Well they're fine. They don't have to do anything.

MJ: Have people on the other hand gotten mad at you because you demanded something.

AH: No. One time in Seattle, it was the only time I've had trouble flying, I was in Spokane and actually I think it was my travel agent's sort of miscommunication with me. She asked me how I flew on small planes. I said well fine, they put me on aisle chair an carry me up the steps off the tarmac and it's no problem. OK Well I got to Spokane, this was a small plane, 19 passenger, and it wouldn't really have been a problem.....

(The End)